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**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Alaska National Guard

August 26, 2014

By Sgt. Balinda O'Neal

207th Engineer Support Platoon conducts first annual training

Camp Denali, Alaska – Alaska Army National Guardsmen from the 207th Engineer Support Platoon conducted their first annual training as a unit on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Aug. 8-22.

The 207th ESP Soldiers, alongside eight instructors from U.S. Army Alaska's 6th Engineer Battalion, conducted training focused on their military occupational specialty and warrior skills.

"This was the majority of the Soldiers first annual training with any unit," said Staff Sgt. John Cupp, platoon sergeant for the 207th ESP. "They were very receptive and took in all of the training from drown proofing to road building."

The Guardsmen, many just out of basic training, received instruction on a variety of heavy equipment including a front end loader, bulldozer, dump truck and grader.

"We all loved it because we are actually getting to push dirt," said Spc. Chantz Gaither, a heavy vehicle driver with the 207th ESP. "We ran through a mock road situation, dug a pit with a bulldozer and were even able to run three to four pieces of equipment in close proximity to each other."

"The instructors showed us what we needed to do and then backed off to allow us to get the stick time we needed on the equipment," added Gaither. "We were all hungry to operate the equipment and had the desire to learn."

After a week of heavy equipment operations, the Guardsmen focused on a variety of warrior skills including radio procedures, using VS17 panel markers to call in Alaska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, land navigation, improvised explosive device training, squad tactics and even squeezed in vertical training on the rappel tower.

"The training was jam-packed and all-inclusive," explained Cupp. "We wouldn't have been able to pull off this remarkable, very effective training without the collaboration of all the supporting personnel, from active duty to the mechanics on site."

The 207th ESP began organization just over a year ago and will have a guidon unveiling ceremony to officially recognize the unit in September.

Photo Cutlines:

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Army Guardsman Spc. Chantz Gaither, a heavy vehicle driver with the 207th Engineer Support Platoon, receives training on how to level a road from a U.S. Army Alaska 6th Engineer Battalion instructor during his unit's first annual training on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Aug. 8-22. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Earl)

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Army Guardsman Pfc. Robert Stone, a heavy vehicle driver with the 207th Engineer Support Platoon, receives training on how to make an anti-force protection berm with a d7 bulldozer from a U.S. Army Alaska 6th Engineer Battalion instructor during his unit's first annual training on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Aug. 8-22. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Earl)

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Members of the 207th Engineer Support Platoon conduct training while two Alaska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawks from 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, pass over head during a training mission. The 207th ESP conducted their first annual training on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Aug. 8-22. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Earl)

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Army Guardsman Sgt. Almeida, heavy vehicle driver with the 207th Engineer Support Platoon, uses a grader to build a road after receiving instruction from U.S. Army Alaska's 6th Engineer Battalion during his unit's first annual training as a unit on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Aug. 8-22. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Earl)

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Members of the 207th Engineer Support Platoon receive instruction from Staff Sgt. John Cupp, 207th ESP platoon sergeant, during the unit's first annual training held on Joint-Base Elmendorf-Richardson Aug. 8-22. The Guardsmen received instruction on a variety of heavy equipment including a front end loader, bulldozer, dump truck and grader. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Earl)